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COMMENTS ON GEORGIAN POLITICAL PURGE

The large scale reorganization of the Georgian Party and Government generally appears as an exoneration of Georgian leaders who were criticized and arrested in 1951-1952. This reversal follows the pattern previously set by the clearance of the Moscow doctors and is yet another move by the new regime discrediting policies and decisions made under Stalin.

In 1951-1952, the Georgian political leadership was publicly criticized for corruption, speculation and encouraging local instead of national patriotism. At that time public revelations on the Georgian situation seemed to reflect on the position of L. P. Beria who was considered to have a personal interest in Georgian affairs. Beria himself attended a Georgian Party meeting on 1 April 1952 which marked the high point of the 1951-1952 purges, and replaced, among others, the top Party Secretary.

The present Georgian developments, therefore, appear to be the result of high level political decisions in Moscow exonerating Beria and certain of his Georgian henchmen.

These decisions are not necessarily related to a struggle for power among top Soviet leaders. Stalin may have been the moving force behind the 1951-1952 purges, particularly in view of his interest in Georgian affairs. In this case, the present reversal would indicate only the ability of the new leaders to reverse Stalin decisions with which they do not agree. However, if Malenkov, under Stalin, played a part in the earlier Georgian developments, then the current exoneration of Beria's men could reflect a lack of control by Malenkov over the top Kremlin leadership.

The over-all picture of Georgian politics is further clouded, however, by the fact that some top Georgian Party and police officials who appeared to be Beria associates are still under fire.

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